

ORIGINAL

OPEN MEETING AGENDA ITEM



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To: The Arizona Corporation Commission

Acting Chairman Doug Little
Commissioner Bob Stump
Commissioner Bob Burns
Commissioner Tom Forese

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Re: **Further Scrutiny Needed / Docket # E-01933A-15-0178**

AZ CORP COMMISSION
DOCKET CONTROL

Dear Sirs:

My name is Elsie Ermenc and I am a TEP customer.

I am medically disabled and due to these conditions, cannot live in low-income housing. I pay full-cost rent. I also pay full-cost storage rent because I cannot afford to live with what I own. All to say: there's precious little left over from my federal disability check for other expenses of living.

Because my income is below the poverty line, I receive the "Residential Lifeline" discount on my electric bills. This is welcome assistance. However I must also point out that the "discount" only reduces the basic monthly service charge -- and not the rest of the bill.

I cannot afford air-conditioning or use of a fan in the summer, nor can I afford heat in the winter. I limit my "dark hours" use of the one LED bulb, bought full cost at Ace Hardware. The elderly refrigerator provided by the landlord, which guzzles approximately 5 times the electricity of an Energy Star appliance, eats up the rest of my electric bill, towards which no discount applies. My windows rattle, the wood in the sills is rotting and coming away from the walls (I have an ant farm in one sill), and "a river runs through it" when the rain blows in from the south. I cannot weatherproof because the building information sheet states: "If tape or other adhesives are used, EACH instance will cost \$20 from your security deposit" (according to the Information Sheet I was given instead of a lease, even though I ostensibly have a lease.)

People who rent and who are poor tend to be low utility users. Many of us are extremely frugal, far past the point of discomfort, because we have no choice. Yet we are subject to the same fixed charges, fees, taxes and surcharges as high end users who, because they have no economic incentive to save, escalate costs for the rest of us as their power needs escalate, the more electronic "bells and whistles" they buy.

Another problem for the low end user: the current "energy efficient" programs offered by TEP simply do not trickle down to us. They're not meant to. They are aimed squarely at the working middle and upper class homeowner who can afford to invest in costly energy audits and upgrades.

If discounted products and services cannot be utilized equally by all, then why should the many who don't directly benefit, fund programs that only the few can afford? Think about it. What behavior does a discount really enable?

Given that the Southwest is in for the worst effects of global warming in the U.S., there is added urgency to educate people to change -- and change in the direction that we low end users have set.

I would first like to see *metrics* from TEP on just *who* is participating in these nice-sounding programs and who is not. For one who cannot work, what use is job creation to me? I can't hope to ever hold a job again. What good is a refrigerator-recycling program to me if my landlord won't buy into it? And why should he if his profit margin suffers; he has other bills to pay; and he doesn't live with the bills the monster in my kitchen creates. Again, it boils down to low-income renters being hit from both sides -- asked to pay more for programs that they are least able to fund, whose benefits they cannot access.

I think TEP customers and the Commission are owed more utilization data before continuance is approved. *If* the current programs are being utilized, are they generating increased efficiency *or are they enabling more wasteful behavior?* *Who* is making use of the discounts offered and who is being shut out? If the data shows these programs are not extending equitably to all, then I think it is only fair to ask that TEP explore ways to be more inclusive, even if it means rethinking the idea that incentivizing consumerism is the road to a sustainable planet.

I would ask you to consider *shifting* funding from programs offering cost "savings" that sound good but aren't real -- at least to people like me -- to consumer education programs that emphasize cheap, efficiency "tweaks" anyone can instantly put into use. How about inserts in our monthly billing statements that *educate* instead of advertisements to spend? How about recycling programs that *deliver* back to the community they take from?

I would also suggest that energy audits of all electric customers would do far more to enlighten the public than the discount programs for goods and services currently in place. They would provide *benchmarks* -- actionable data -- instead of rhetoric. I would further suggest that rental properties have top priority to receive such evaluations, preferably free of charge, because rentals are where the worst energy inefficiencies occur and where the most resistance to fixing them exists.

Thank you for your time and consideration of points raised.

Sincerely,

Elsie Ermenc
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